

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANDREA M. ESQUER
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indictment of 48 Defendants Smashes Large Human-Smuggling Organization

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Feb. 14, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced a 232-count indictment of 48 defendants in the breakup of a major human-smuggling organization operating in Phoenix and Naco, Ariz. Goddard was joined by Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon and other law enforcement officials during an afternoon press conference to announce the indictment.

A seven-month investigation conducted by the Arizona Financial Crimes Task Force found evidence of a well-organized human smuggling organization responsible for bringing thousands of undocumented immigrants into Arizona each year. Investigators estimate this organization has been operating for more than a decade in Arizona.

The organization was led by Jose Luis Suarez-Lemus, 41, of Peoria and Roel Ayala-Fernandez, 35, of Phoenix. Both men are Cuban immigrants. This organization contracted with "border organizers" to drive the smuggled immigrants from the Mexico/Arizona border near Naco to Phoenix.

According to investigators, undocumented immigrants were charged about \$2,500 each to be smuggled into the United States. At the border, a "guide" or "walker" would bring immigrants through the San Pedro River Riparian National Conservation Area. They would meet with a "border organizer," who would then pay the different "sub-contractors" along the route – such as drivers, drop house operators, bank account holders and load drivers – for their services. The "border organizers" were typically responsible for arranging for the money to be collected from "sponsor families" in the U.S.

The Suarez-Fernandez Organization transported two to four groups of six to 10 people per day, primarily using rental cars for the transportation. In an average week, the organization generated as much as \$130,000 in cash for its transportation services.

The investigation was conducted by the Phoenix Police Department, the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the Attorney General's Office and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The charges include conspiracy, participating in a criminal syndicate, assisting a criminal syndicate, illegally conducting an enterprise, money laundering, fraud, human smuggling and illegal use of wire or electronic communication. The defendants arrested today include:

- **Jose Luis Suarez-Lemus**, 41, of Peoria, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of participating in a criminal syndicate, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the first degree, one count of money laundering in the second degree, one count of fraud, one count of human smuggling and 35 counts of illegal use of a wire or electronic communication. If convicted of all charges, Suarez-Lemus faces up to 35 years in prison.

- **Roel Ayala Fernandez**, 35, of Phoenix, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of participating in a criminal syndicate, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the first degree, one count of money laundering in the second degree, one count of human smuggling and 14 counts of illegal use of a wire or electronic communication. If convicted of all charges, Fernandez faces up to 35 years in prison.
- **Mayeline Diaz Dominguez**, 35, of Peoria, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the second degree, one count of fraud, one count of human smuggling and 10 counts of illegal use of a wire or electronic communication. If convicted of all charges, Dominguez faces up to 25 years in prison.
- **Odalís Arenas Fernandez**, 40 of Phoenix, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the second degree, one count of human smuggling and six counts of illegal use of wire or electronic communication. If convicted of all charges, Fernandez faces up to 25 years in prison.
- **Yoandis Roque-Fernandez**, 31, of Phoenix, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the second degree, one count of human smuggling and 17 counts of illegal use of wire or electronic communication. If convicted of all charges, Roque-Fernandez faces up to 25 years in prison.
- **Gelys Gomez Gallardo**, 36, of Phoenix, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the second degree, one count of human smuggling and three counts of illegal use of wire or electronic communication. If convicted of all charges, Gallardo faces up to 25 years in prison.
- **Juan Carlos Perez-Morodo**, 46, of Phoenix, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the second degree, one count of human smuggling and three counts of illegal use of wire or electronic communication. If convicted of all charges, Perez-Morodo faces up to 25 years in prison.
- **Silvia Lluís Bazail**, 54, of Phoenix, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the second degree, one count of human smuggling and five counts of illegal use of a wire or electronic communication. If convicted of all charges, Bazail faces up to 25 years in prison.
- **Rene Perez**, 48, of Bisbee, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the second degree and one count of human smuggling. If convicted of all charges, Perez faces up to 25 years in prison.
- **Maria Del Carmen Tamayo-Rios**, 25, of Phoenix, was charged with one count of conspiracy, one count of assisting a criminal syndicate, one count of illegally conducting an enterprise, one count of money laundering in the second degree, one count of human smuggling and one count of illegal use of a wire or electronic communication. If convicted of all charges, Tamayo-Rios faces up to 25 years in prison.

Today's operation led to the discovery of 13 drop houses that were closed, the arrest of 20 suspects and the detention of 210 undocumented immigrants who were turned over to ICE for deportation. The remaining defendants in this indictment are not named because they have not yet been served with their indictments. Additional suspects were arrested today at locations where search warrants were served and may also be charged.

###